

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2011 question paper
for the guidance of teachers

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/13

Paper 1 (Essay), maximum raw mark 50

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

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Section A: The Sociological Perspective

1 “The functionalist theory of socialisation has many limitations and few strengths.” Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) A few general statements about socialisation might be worth two or three marks. At the top of the band, some simple links might be made between the concept of socialisation and functionalist theory, though the knowledge demonstrated will be very narrow in range.
- (7–12) A solid descriptive account of the functionalist theory of socialisation would fit this band. There will be little or no attempt at assessment and the level of understanding will be rather basic in answers at the lower end.
- (13–18) The functionalist theory of socialisation will be described with reasonable accuracy and a basic attempt will be made to assess it. At the lower end, the assessment may be through juxtaposition with other theories of socialisation, particularly those within the interactionist perspective. At the top of the band, the assessment will be explicit, albeit somewhat limited in range and depth.
- (19–25) As for the previous band, except that the assessment will be incisive and sustained. The interactionist perspective may be used to good effect to illustrate the limitations of the functionalist theory of socialisation, and this may be complemented by other lines of analysis, perhaps focusing on the conservative and/or deterministic assumptions inherent in the functionalist perspective. Answers at the top of the band will consider a range of relevant criticisms in some detail and may also attempt to provide a reasoned and balanced conclusion about the overall value of the functionalist theory of socialisation.

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**2 “In modern industrial societies individuals are free to choose their own social identities.”
Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- (0–6) This is essentially a question about structure versus action; determinism versus free will; and modernist versus post-modernist perspectives on social identity. However, little or nothing of this will be registered in answers that merit the bottom band. Common-sense answers about how we acquire roles or social identities are likely to feature lower in the band. Higher in the band, there may be some broadly relevant references to socialisation and the concept of social identity may be defined. We may also see answers that purport to show that affluence and modernity have helped increase individual freedom, but again the analysis will be extremely basic and may lack focus on the key idea of social identity.
- (7–12) Lower in the band, we may see answers that rely on the functionalist theory of socialisation, implying perhaps that social identities are largely the product of influences over which the individual has little direct control. A better response would be to contrast the functionalist theory with interactionist accounts of socialisation and to note the emphasis that the latter give to human agency in negotiating roles and identities. However, as this is not primarily a question about theories of socialisation, answers that are confined to this type of approach can score no more than 12 marks.
- (13–18) At this level, the answers will be more analytical and directly focused on the question as set. There will be a basic attempt to explain why modern, affluent societies may have provided individuals with greater opportunity to choose their own social identities. This may be done in terms of references to post-modernist theory and/or through a discussion of changes in particular areas of society, such as the loosening of traditional class divisions, the greater independence of women, and the fragmentation of family types. At the top of the band, the discussion will be clear and well directed, though the analysis may lack sharpness.
- (19–25) The proposition in the question will be explained satisfactorily and the assessment will be developed and well informed. It is possible to reach this level by focusing on particular social identities (class, gender, ethnic, age, etc.) and evaluating the extent to which social constraints have given way to greater individual freedom in each of the cases considered. Alternatively, the assessment may be more abstract by discussing such issues as determinism versus free will and whether the notion that people have more lifestyle choices today is more illusion than reality. A well-formulated assessment of post-modernist theory is likely to merit marks at the top of the band.

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Section B: Sociological Methods

3 “The data collected by sociologists using questionnaires is very limited by comparison with the evidence generated by participant observation studies.” Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) A few vague comments about questionnaires and/or participant observation would be sufficient to merit a mark in the middle of the band. Within this, if there were also a very simple attempt to explain the view expressed in the question, a mark at the top of the band should be awarded.
- (7–12) Answers at the bottom of the band may be confined to a few broadly accurate observations about the limitations of questionnaires as a sociological research method. At this level, there will be little or no attempt to explain why it might be thought that the evidence collected using participant observation is superior to that obtained through the use of questionnaires. To reach the top part of the band, however, there must be a basic attempt to contrast the limitations of questionnaires with the purported advantages of participant observation studies. There may be little or no attempt to assess the view expressed in the question at this level.
- (13–18) The view expressed in the question will be explained accurately, possibly by referring to the interpretivist critique of quantitative data and the methods (questionnaires, structured interviews) through which it is derived. Higher in the band, the explanation will be more developed and will make good use of relevant concepts such as validity, verstehen, and in-depth understanding. Answers that merit the higher part of the band will also provide some relevant assessment, though it may be somewhat limited in scope and possibly confined to a few basic points about the strengths of questionnaires and/or the limitations of participant observation. A better assessment would connect the strengths of questionnaires with the limitations of participant observation and vice versa.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will offer a full and well-informed account of why the data collected using questionnaires might be considered inferior to the insights provided by participant observation studies. The assessment will cover a range of strengths and limitations of each research method (questionnaires and participant observation) and will demonstrate a sound understanding of the theoretical issues involved. There will also be an attempt to reach an overall conclusion in response to the question and the extent to which this is developed may be the main discriminator between scripts within the top band. Answers that reach the top of the band are likely to question what is meant by the term ‘limited’ in relation to different types of sociological data and more generally raise questions about the basis on which research methods can be ranked against each other in terms of usefulness or degree of insight produced.

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**4 “Practical factors are the main influence on the sociologist's choice of research method.”
Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- (0–6) A few general points about research methods, unrelated to the question, would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, we may see answers that offer a few simple assertions about the factors that influence choice of research method.
- (7–12) A basic explanation of the idea that practical factors are a major influence on choice of research method, with no further development, would merit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, there may be some recognition that choice of research method may also be affected by other factors, including theoretical perspective and ethical issues. Alternatively, to reach the top half of the band, candidates may offer a fuller account of how choice of research method may be influenced by practical factors. This account might refer to practical considerations such as time, money, location, size of sample, funding, nature of the study group, and researcher's skill set.
- (13–18) Answers will identify a range of factors that may influence choice of research method and show a sound understanding of the part that both practical factors and theoretical perspective may play in this process. Higher in the band, there will also be an attempt at assessing the relative importance of these factors, particularly with regard to practical factors.
- (19–25) At this level we should expect an accurate and detailed treatment of the role that practical factors may play in the choice of research method. Other factors will also be considered, though perhaps in less depth. The assessment will be explicit and sustained and, at the top end, clear and incisive conclusions will be reached about the relative importance of practical factors as an influence on the choice of research methods.

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Section C: Social Differentiation and Stratification

5 “Sociological explanations of gender inequality are too deterministic and fail to take into account the contrasting experiences of different groups of females.” Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) A few simple reflections on social inequality in general may be worth two or three marks. Some simple observations about the nature of gender inequality would trigger the upper part of the band.
- (7–12) A basic account of some of the changes in society that may have led to a reduction in the inequality females face would fit the lower part of the band. A sound description of the forms and patterns of gender inequality today would also be worth up to 10 marks. Higher in the band, the answer will outline one or more sociological explanations of gender inequality, perhaps through reference to feminist theory. However, there will be little or no assessment at this level.
- (13–18) A sound account of two or more sociological explanations of gender inequality would merit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, there will also be some assessment of the view that sociological explanations of gender inequality are too deterministic. The failure of many established theories to take account of the experiences of different groups of women may also be addressed, in a simple way, in answers that merit 17 or 18 marks.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound understanding of a number of sociological explanations of gender inequality and this may include well-informed references to the different strands of feminist theory. In addition, there will also be a well-constructed assessment of the view that sociological explanations of gender inequality are too deterministic. Higher in the band, there will be also be some attempt to explicate and assess the idea that contrasting experiences of different groups of women are somewhat neglected in explanations and theories of gender inequality. Good use of empirical evidence alongside theory might also help to distinguish answers that merit the top part of the band. Engagement with the post-modernist critique of feminist theory may be a further feature of high quality answers to this question.

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6 “Class divisions are disappearing in modern societies.” Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) A few insubstantial comments about social class might be worth two or three marks. An answer to the question based mainly or wholly on assertion would fit the top of the band.
- (7–12) A basic account of one or more theory of social class (most likely the Marxist) would trigger the lower part of the band. A limited attempt to explain the idea that class divisions are breaking down, perhaps through reference to related social changes (such as increased social mobility, impact of the welfare state, and decline in traditional manual employment), would reach the upper part of the band. Answers based on a sound account of the embourgeoisement and/or proletarianisation theses would also fit the upper part of the band.
- (13–18) A good range of points will be made to explain the idea that class divisions are breaking down, and at the higher end of the band especially the discussion may be contemporary, perhaps with references to post-modernist theory and the impact of consumerism in possibly blurring class boundaries. Higher in the band, there will also be an attempt to assess the claim that class divisions are disappearing, though this may be lacking in depth.
- (19–25) Answers at this level will demonstrate a clear and detailed understanding of the strands of sociological thought that underpin the idea that class divisions are disappearing. The assessment will be coherent and sustained, avoiding simple conclusions and recognising different sides to the debate about the relevance of class analysis to modern societies. At the top of the band, there should be clear evidence of sophistication, such as the candidate who understands that ‘social class’ may be defined in different ways and recognises the implications that this has for the question. Answers that demonstrate a good understanding of the issues raised by the post-modernist critique of class analysis are also likely to feature at the top of the band.